

**SECRET****NRO REVIEW COMPLETED****COR 1321**  
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11 SEP 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Acting Chief, DPD**SUBJECT:** Operational Control of Satellite Photographic Capability**REFERENCE:** Memorandum to AC/DPD from DPD/C/SPB; subject: Evaluation of Present Satellite Programs; dated 23 August 1961 (COR 1273)

1. Today the U. S. Government is limited to two programs under the direction of the Central Intelligence Agency capable of obtaining overhead reconnaissance of denied territory. One program employs the U-2 aircraft, the other, the DISCOVERED Satellite. To use the U-2 to obtain desired intelligence over heavily defended areas of the Soviet Bloc Countries entails potentially higher risks and requires demonstrated vital urgency to obtain political approval. The orbiting satellite has been employed with only nominal risks and is politically acceptable. At this time the capability of the USSR to destroy this vehicle is negligible.

2. There are several limitations in the satellite program that must be given some consideration. The lens-film combinations do not produce resolutions that are sufficient for technical intelligence. Whenever there is a need for this high quality photography the U-2 will have to be used. In addition, the chances of obtaining the desired orbital parameters is a limitation that cannot be ignored. However, when faced with the requirement to obtain photographic reconnaissance of vast areas of denied territory it is a limitation that must be accepted.

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3. If, during critical times, the Agency desires to possess the capability of obtaining photography of vital targets, priorities must be obtained and actions must be coordinated with other agencies to insure certain items are available when needed:

a. Vehicles:

Implementation of this program requires a minimum of two vehicles on hand at all times. The present inventory of vehicles must be examined to determine if sufficient numbers are available to meet this requirement. If there is a shortage the planned CORONA/ARGON missions must be canceled to provide the numbers needed to launch on high priority missions. To develop the capability through normal procurement procedures will require excessive lead time.

b. Launching Pads:

Due to the nature of the mission it is impossible to accurately forecast the launch date. Therefore, the program must have priorities high enough to guarantee a launching pad whenever the need arises.

c. Cameras:

A constant schedule must be maintained mating the desired camera and lens film combinations to the vehicle. Backup equipment required must be programmed.

d. Mission Support:

To insure that missions are prepared and launched on time priorities for various types of support equipment must be obtained. This would include the use of computers, test equipment, recovery forces, and tracking stations.

4. To be ready to launch at any time either in support of periods of tension or in support of the Nation's Emergency War Plan there are certain requirements that must be met:

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a. Targeting:

The intelligence community must provide a list of target priorities either by target complexes, individual targets, or a combination of both in sufficient time to allow camera programs to be prepared and stored for use as the need arises.

b. Weather Support:

Operational concepts must be coordinated with Weather Central as necessary to enable full support on relatively short notice.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

This memorandum is written in support of a memorandum "Evaluation of Present Reconnaissance Satellite Program" and does not go into great detail regarding our present and future operational concepts. It should, however, point out the capabilities we presently have and how they might best be used by establishing priorities for availabilities and requirements. New hardware and facilities are not required nor needed to initiate operational control of satellite photographic capabilities during these critical times. As new equipment is developed it can be incorporated into the program.

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[Redacted]  
Chief, Special Projects Branch, DPD

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DPD/SPB/[Redacted] (19 Sept 61)

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